



STATE REPRESENTATIVE SHERRY APPLETON



23rd DISTRICT
2008 SESSION UPDATE

Winter 2008

Dear Neighbors,

This year's legislative session is a short one, but the list of pressing issues is long. Education, the economy and health care are of course hot topics, but so too are our troubled ferry system, public safety, clean air and water, property taxes, consumer protection and many others.

It's hard to overstate how vital ferries are to those of us who call the West Sound home. Before the session even began, I introduced a package of legislation designed to save riders money in a variety of ways and give ferry-dependent communities a larger say in the system's operation. I've also reintroduced my bill from last year to provide a basic level of health care to every Washington resident, and it has once again garnered the support of many of my colleagues.

As vice chair of the House State Government and Tribal Affairs panel, I'm continuing to explore ways to make our public institutions, all of them, more effective, efficient and responsive. And as a newly elected member of the Capital Budget Committee, I'm working to see that Kitsap and other deserving communities around the state are well-represented when construction, repair and renovation investments are being allocated.

I'll let you know in my next newsletter how these efforts progress, and I'll update you as well on the other issues that affect our families, jobs and quality of life here in Kitsap. Please take a look at this brief look back at the 2007 session, combined with a snapshot of our current 2008 activities, and as always, I hope you'll be in touch to give me your comments, suggestions and feedback. Thank you for the opportunity to once more work for you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Sherry Appleton

Sherry

★ TOWN HALLS! ★

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23,
Rep. Christine Rolfes and I will host a pair
of 23rd-district Legislative Town Halls in
Bremerton and Keyport. Times and locations
are still to come, so please check your local
papers or email me to learn more.

A SCHOOL FOR LEGISLATORS

I was surprised and greatly honored last fall when I was one of just three Washington state lawmakers, and one of only 39 from throughout the western United States, invited to attend a unique school: The Western Legislative Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., created and administered by the nonpartisan Council of State Governments. Most people don't realize that a school



A highlight of the training for me was a team-building exercise that took place on the beautiful campus of the U.S. Air Force Academy outside Colorado Springs.

for legislators exists – I didn't know before you sent me to Olympia. But it makes perfect sense to offer state lawmakers, who come from all walks of life, intensive classes in negotiation, time management, ethics, communications and other areas that are crucial in a modern legislature.

BUILDING ON 2007's SUCCESSES



Last year's legislative session was, by just about any measure, one of the most successful in recent memory. Headline writers and newspaper editors were almost unanimous in their good reviews. The great majority of the stakeholders, local citizen groups and individuals that I have spoken with since we adjourned in April have been positive (even though some major issues – and I put ferries at the top of that list – remain seriously problematic).

We wrote a bipartisan state budget that put kids, jobs and health care first. We set aside more than \$700 million in reserves, to guard against tax increases or service cuts. We clamped down on car thieves, beefed up efforts to clean up Puget Sound and Hood Canal, and in a one-day special session, put a one-percent cap on property tax hikes that had been thrown out earlier by the state Supreme Court. I'm particularly proud that several of my own bills became law in 2007, including

- **HB 1135**, which gives Bainbridge Island the ability to protect its water supply by designating aquifer conservation zones;
- **HB 1654**, which amends election laws to help reconcile inconsistencies between machine-counted ballots and those counted by hand;
- **HB 1693**, which brings the timing of ferry worker contract negotiations into line with other public employees;
- **HB 2152**, which eliminates ambiguities in election laws so that citizens, candidates and government have a clear understanding of when election results can be legally challenged; and
- **HB 2281**, which allows public employees to receive donations of shared leave when they are providing volunteer service during a state or federally declared emergency.

One of the things the Legislature did in 2007 that could have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people was to take the next step following the earlier creation of the Washington Prescription Drug Program. The prescription drug card was issued beginning in March, and it will allow holders to save 20 percent on non-generic drugs and 60 percent on generics. Countless people who have no prescription insurance or whose insurance is only partial will benefit, including seniors in Medicare Part D limbo, who can finally get the medicines they need without facing the tough choice between putting a meal on the table or taking their pills. The Rx Card is free. To get yours, call 1-800-913-4146.

In all, 2007 was a year of progress on many fronts, though not all. Ferries remain a problem that demands a solution. Payday lenders still prey on financially vulnerable families. Even with crime rates dropping, public safety is still a paramount concern. But we're working on all of these and more, and I'm confident this year's short session will be a good complement to last year's successes.



With a stroke of Gov. Chris Gregoire's pen, my bill establishing an aquifer conservation zone controlled by Bainbridge Island became law. Joining me in the governor's office for the ceremony were Sen. Phil Rockefeller, research analyst Ethan Moreno of the Legislature's nonpartisan Office of Program Research, and Bainbridge Island legislative liaison Phil Watkins.

WORKING FOR FAIR FERRY FARES



The first four bills I filed for consideration this year are designed to solve ferry-related problems, and I’ve since added a fifth to the hopper. My immediate goals are to save money for ferry customers in a variety of ways, and the long-term goal is to create a well-funded, dependable, responsive system rather than the current system we have that seems to lurch from crisis to crisis

while digging deeper into the pockets of the riders who need it most. Briefly, these bills would:

- end “lock-out,” which occurs when the owner of a pass attempts to pay for two vehicles on the same ferry **(HB 2453)**;
- prohibit expiration dates on prepaid multi-use ferry passes **(HB 2455)**;
- reduce fares by tripling the amount of Washington’s state fuel tax devoted to the ferry system, without having any impact on the fuel tax itself **(HB 2454)**;
- create a state ferry commission comprising members from ferry-using counties, to weigh in on everything from safety issues to route-setting and fare decisions **(HB 2451)**; and
- direct Washington State Ferries to consider the desirability of reasonable fares for daily commuters and other frequent ferry riders **(HB 2718)**.

Some of these issues were raised at the Ferry Summit in December, which was a valuable exercise bringing riders, ferry administrators, elected officials and others together to get the system’s problems out on the table and begin a serious search for solutions.

HEALTH CARE FOR EVERYONE? WHY NOT?



In my last newsletter I wrote about my bill that would create the Washington Health Care Trust. The goals of the legislation are to simplify a massively complicated insurance/health-care system and extend coverage to every Washingtonian, *while preserving every*

individual’s right to choose his or her health-care provider and leaving medical decisions in the hands of patients and their health-care professionals.

The bill did not reach the floor of the Legislature last session, but it is still alive and I will continue to advocate this common-sense solution to one of the most crucial, and certainly the most expensive, problems facing the people of Washington. In the meantime, my sponsorship of the bill had an unexpected result: I received the “Spine Award” from the Western Washington Physicians for a National Health Program. I’m honored by the award and proud to have the support of the physicians. They know first-hand what a mess the current situation is, and they know, like the rest of us, how important it is to our state to clean it up before we go bankrupt while hundreds of thousands of our neighbors do without regular medical care.

CAPITAL BUDGET – CONSTRUCTION, REPAIR . . . AND JOBS



I’m happy to announce that my newest assignment in Olympia is to serve on the House Capital Budget Committee. Along with my seat on the House Transportation Committee, I’m now a member of two of the three budget-writing panels in the House. The hours are long but the opportunity to make a difference for our district and the state is a great one.

The Capital Budget Committee oversees state spending on construction and repair of state office buildings, colleges and universities, prisons and juvenile-rehabilitation facilities, public schools, parks and several other major elements of the state’s infrastructure. In the process it rejuvenates communities, creates economic opportunities and provides good, family-wage jobs for people in a wide range of trades and professions. And, unlike the operating and transportation budgets, which often give rise to bitter partisan battles, the Capital Budget is generally supported by members of both parties, because it is essentially paid for by state-issued bonds, dedicated accounts, trust revenue and federal grants.

Our district received more than \$50 million in the current capital budget, with the bulk of that, almost \$40 million, going to much-needed projects at Olympic College. As we write a supplemental budget this year and prepare the biennial spending plan in 2009, I’m hoping to increase appropriations for our district and provide support for such deserving local projects as Kitsap Mental Health’s Burwell House, WestSound Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, the Poulsbo Marine Science Center, Bainbridge Island’s Kids Discovery Center, and schools and parks throughout our communities.

WHERE’S MY E-MEMO?

I’m afraid the E-Memo is taking the year off. Election-year laws restrict representatives to two “unsolicited” mailings (print or electronic) this year – one at the beginning of session and one immediately when we adjourn. Even though everyone on our E-Memo distribution list asked to be included, E-Memos are classified as unsolicited because they are not being sent to a specific person in response to a specific question.

This newsletter is the first of my allowable mailings, and my post-session wrap-up will be the second and last; my next E-Memo will go out next fall, after the election-year restrictions are lifted. The law does not restrict my ability to respond to constituents who contact my office with comments, questions or requests for assistance, though, so please stay in touch throughout the session and the entire year.